

DOING VIOLENCE TO THE PERSONS AND
PROPERTY OF MEN, OPPOSITE TO
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

S E R M O N

PREACHED

AT IPSWICH, Suffolk, June 11th, 1780

OCCASIONED BY

THE LATE INSURRECTIONS IN LONDON.

By *DAVID EDWARDS.*

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-
suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness,
Temperance:—Against such there is no Law.

GALATIANS V. 22, 23.

L O N D O N :

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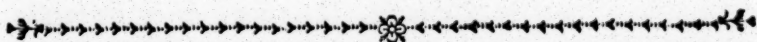
IN composing this Discourse, the Author had not the least Idea of printing it, designing only to deliver it among the people committed to his charge;—but some persons, who heard it from the pulpit, were of opinion it might prove a word in season to the Public in general, and therefore intreated him to permit its being printed.

If it should (under GOD) be the means to deter any from acts of violence for the future, and excite to that divine temper of loving our neighbour as ourselves, it will be well, and the wishes of the Author and his Friends will be accomplished, while the glory will be due to GOD alone.



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S E R M O N, &c.



Luke iii. 14.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN.

 HE Christian Religion which the Gospel teaches, is not a *fragment*, that is a partial, broken part of a thing, but it is a complete System, and it's design is to make the professors of it good throughout. It teaches us a proper conduct towards all with whom we are connected.—A CHRISTIAN is a complete, uniform, finished character. A *christian*, properly so called, is a Lover of God, a Believer in Christ, a true Penitent, and one who gives diligent attendance upon every ordinance of religious worship.—Altho' True, Heart-religion begins and centers in God, yet its effects spread far and wide:

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it includes a proper conduct towards all. A real christian is not only devout, but has a regard to all civil, as well as religious duties.—He is not only a servant of God in matters purely devotional, but is an useful member of Society; he makes conscience of justice, humanity, righteousness, and charity, with all the good offices due to his fellow-creatures: If he is a *Ruler*, he is a GOOD RULER, if a *Subject*, he is a GOOD SUBJECT, a good FATHER, a good MASTER, a good SERVANT; because he endeavours to “keep a good conscience, both “towards God and towards man.”—It is the office of a good Minister not only to preach immediately the great *doctrines* of the gospel, but likewise to inculcate the great and important duties which the gospel enjoins; and it would be very extravagant for any one to disrelish these duties thro’ a pretended zeal, for the doctrines of grace, since these duties are no inconsiderable parts of the gospel.

John the Baptist has here set down an excellent example for gospel ministers to imitate;—he taught the people both doctrines and duties in their most extensive compass:—Abundance of people from all parts flocked to hear, and different sorts of people applied to him for directions; among others, the pharisees and publicans,

cans, and last of all the soldiers, all in their turns asking, "What shall we do?"

His reply to the soldiers is what I intend chiefly to insist upon at this time;—a time, in which tumults and insurrections have sadly disgraced this Protestant country!

"DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN," is the voice of heaven, and what is here commanded, is of universal concern to all.—From whence you may learn, that the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches the utmost humanity and gentleness, and forbids all violence to men's persons and properties.

I. Let us first enquire, what these words imply?

II. Consider the reasons why we are to *do violence to no man* :

III. Make some inferences.

I. What is implied in these words?

1st. They do not give the least countenance to that indifferency or tameness of spirit, which will lead a man to an unlimited compliance
2 with

with the sinful conduct of others.—There is such a thing as a timid, passive tameness, which submits to every encroachment without a struggle, but this forms no part of the *christian's* duty.—That servile compliance which falls in with the vain opinions and manners of men on all occasions, is so far from being a virtue, that it is really pregnant with many vices.—Had not our fore-fathers stood firm to the gospel in the days of trial and persecution, had they tamely submitted to the impositions of men, we should not now have had one leaf of the Bible left amongst us.

An implicit tameness defeats and overthrows all steadiness of principle, and produces a conformity to the sinful customs of men.—It is impossible to be faithful to God, to support the purity and dignity of the gospel, without opposing the world on various occasions, even tho' we should stand alone.—The three children in *Babylon* stood firm, though all the empire was against them.—*Daniel* prefer'd the lions den rather than disobey God, and wound his own conscience.—The holy martyrs beheld galling fetters, as it were, turn'd into delightful ornaments,—gloomy dungeons appeared lightsome—prisons became as palaces, and furious flames as beds of roses in their view.—A true christian

tian dares to be singular in a depraved age, though hissing crowds should point at him as he goes along, and men of fashion despise him; because he knows, it is far better to have a wounded body than a wounded conscience.

The friendly temper of the gospel is to be carefully distinguished from the spirit of cowardice.—A gospel temper gives up no important truth from flattery; it is not only consistent with a firm mind, but absolutely requires a fortitude of soul, and a fixed principle, in order to give it real value.

2dly. The words of the text do not weaken the authority of *executive Justice*. A malefactor has violence offered to him when imprisoned and punished for his crimes, but then he forfeits, all claim to protection and the benefit of society on account of his guilt. For exemplary penalties are essential to good laws, to give them their due influence, without which they would be empty terrors.—Therefore,

3dly. The grand point which is forbidden in the text, is that harshness and severity, that violence and oppression, which are always the offspring of pride and arrogance.

A gospel spirit will be unwilling to give pain to others;—It teaches compassion, and compassion prompts us to relieve the wants of others, if in our power.—The gospel teaches Forbearance, and forbearance prevents us from retaliating injuries, or rendering evil for evil.—A spirit of meekness restrains us from angry passions; and a candid temper will restrain from judging others with severity.—A true gospel temper is founded on a sense of what we owe to GOD, who made us, and to JESUS CHRIST who redeemed us, and to the common nature of which we share.—A gospel temper, actuated from a reflection of our own feelings and wants, is backward to inflict wounds, is ever ready to oblige, and grateful when obliged by others.—It breathes an habitual kindness towards friends, good will to strangers, and long-suffering towards our enemies.—It teaches us to administer reproof with mildness, and to confer favours with *modesty*.—Hence the zeal of a true Christian is temperate and mixed with Knowledge;—he will not contend with eagerness about trifles; is slow to *contradict*, and slower still to *blame*.—This christian temper is forward to restore peace,—is not fond of intermeddling with other men's affairs, neither is it inquisitive to pry into the secrets of others.—It delights above all things to alleviate distresses, to dry up
the

the widow's tear, and to sooth the heart of the sorrowful.—This temper is nobly enforced by the apostle, when he says, “Bear ye one another’s burthens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST. —Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep” :—he commands that every one should please his neighbour for good to edification,”—and exhorts us to be pitiful and courteous,—to support the weak,—to be patient towards all men, and, as the elect of God, to put on bowels of compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering.”

II. I proceed, in the Second place, to shew some reasons why we are to do violence to no man.

Ist. One reason arises from our obligation to God. The apostle exhorts us to be “followers of God as dear children.”—When we survey HIS works, nothing is so conspicuous as HIS majesty and greatness !—If you consult his Word and Providences, nothing is so remarkable as the method he takes to soften that greatness, and place it in a mild light:—Hence he makes himself known as “the God of consolation,” and with condescending tenderness, accommodates himself to the situation of the distressed,

distressed :—Hence he is said to “ dwell with
 “ the humble and contrite—That he hideth not
 “ his face when the afflicted cry :—He heareth
 “ the broken in heart, and bindeth up their
 “ wounds.”—When he reproved *Adam*, he
 went to him in the cool of the day, *walking in*
the garden ; to teach us to restrain anger.—
 When he admonished *Elijah*, he was not in
 the *whirlwind*, or in the *earthquake*, but in the
still small voice.—When he sent the angels to
Sodom, we read, they *walked* thither. Angels,
 when sent upon errands of *mercy* are said to fly
 with speed, but upon the errand of judgment
 they *walk* ; to shew that the Lord is *slow* to
anger.——

When the eternal Son of God came into the
 world, he was full of mildness and goodness :
 It was prophesied of him long before his in-
 carnation, that he should not “ strive nor cry,
 “ or cause his voice to be heard in the street ;
 “ that a bruised reed he should not break, and
 “ the smoking flax he would not quench :”—
 All these words are descriptive of the mildness
 and tenderness with which he would pursue his
 undertakings.—When in the warmth of zeal,
 two of his disciples asked him leave to pray for
 fire from heaven, to burn those people that
 would not receive him, He turned and rebuked
 them

them, saying, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of:"—assuring them, that "he came not to destroy mens lives but to save them."—When at the time of his suffering, *Peter* cut off *Malchus's* ear, he healed the one, and reproved the other, ordering him to put up his sword in its sheath.—And after his ascension to glory, the distinguishing features of his character are so well known, that St. *Paul* beseeches the Corinthians, "by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of CHRIST." 2 Cor. x. 1.—During all his intercourse with the human race, no harshness, violence or pride, appeared in his conduct; he was ever easy of access to all, mild in his reproofs, and in his whole behaviour amiable and exemplary. Well therefore did he command us, saying, "Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly of heart."

2dly. I may add here another argument; namely, that the HOLY GHOST, the Third person in the ever blessed Trinity, is the inspirer of this temper. For the apostle hath assured us, that "The fruit of the Spirit is in all meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering;" and again, that it is "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, quietness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." You need only open the New Testament, and you will find, that Love, Forbearance, &c. are capital figures

figures presented to our view in almost every page of it.

True it is, that the gospel is far from having produced its full effects upon the nations where the christian religion is professed at present; but this we know, that the gospel shall in due time produce such blessed effects, that the nations of the earth shall learn war no more, and the sound of violence shall no more be heard. Nevertheless, so far as the gospel has had a proper influence, it has gained great and wonderful victories, over those powers of violence and cruelty which prevailed in former ages.—Some nations there are, who having received the gospel, have discouraged, and in some measure abolished *slavery*. It is, questionless, an indelible disgrace and dishonour to any *Protestant* kingdom, such as ours professes to be, in the least to countenance and encourage *Slavery*; and the *African* Slave-trade is a scandal to all Europe. O earth! cover not the blood of these slain!

However, so far as the gospel of JESUS has its effects, it will overthrow the dens of cruelty; it has already rescued thousands from the galling ignominious yoke which former ages groaned under:—it has introduced a more equitable

equitable œconomy between the two sexes, and rendered the conjugal life more happy ; because it teaches husbands to treat their wives with the utmost tenderness and endearment.—It has abated the ferocity of war, and in many places overturned the power of despotism—The gospel has mitigated the cruelty of bloody punishments, and wherever it comes it removes barbarity and persecution for conscience sake, and introduces civil and religious liberty,—And my dear hearers, if you and I pretend respect and zeal for the gospel, and if this respect and zeal be sincere, we dare not allow ourselves in harshness, violence, and severity;—if we do, it is a plain proof that the gospel has not had its proper effects upon our hearts.

3dly. We ought not to offer violence to any one. If you consider the relation we bear to one another, we are by nature formed for society, we are impelled by a kind of compassionate instinct towards each other.—The human race are linked by a thousand connections founded on our common wants; and a gospel temper teaches benignity in every station in life.—To be difficult of access, to be contemptuous and hard-hearted, is to revolt from the principles of christianity.—

How

How feeling are our complaints when we are treated with harshness and violence by those with whom we have any dealings? And ought we not to examine whether we do not at any time inflict that pain upon others, which we ourselves complain of?

It is not sufficient to shew a beneficent temper upon some extraordinary occasions;—the christian temper must not be supported by a few acts now and then; but, by daily and repeated exertions.—It must not break forth into a transient lustre, now and then, like the blaze of a meteor, but should be regular as the sun.—There is not a day passes, in the common transactions of life, and more particularly in the intercourse of domestic life, where there is a numerous family, but this finds large room to operate one way or another.

There are many 'situations in human life where the kind reception, the condescension, and the look of sympathy, will bring greater relief to the heart by far, than a bountiful gift bestowed now and then. Hence it is that some can deny a request with more gracefulness than another can confer a favour.—The gentle spirit of the gospel softens animosities, renews endearments,

endearments, and makes one person's countenance to be a refreshment to another's.

3dly. There is another reason why we should offer violence to no man; because of the great gospel precept, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

A superior, for example, should treat his inferior just in the same manner in which he would reasonably expect to be treated himself, if he was in a low condition, and his inferior advanced:—Is it reasonable that my neighbour should make no encroachment or use no violence towards me and my property? It is equally reasonable I should behave so to him.—Do I expect that another should observe the rules of justice or mercy towards me? I should observe the same towards him: If he should relieve me in my calamities, I ought to do the same to him, if in my power.—If this plain rule was duly observed, it would at once banish harshness, violence, and oppression from the earth: Governors and the governed would be quite of a different temper—Besides, this rule is so plain that it scarcely requires an exposition, Many of our English laws are tedious and intricate, and their language wants perspicuity,

but a person of the weakest understanding can comprehend this : Let him only apply to his own feelings, and ask,—‘ What would I reasonably expect or wish from another ? How would I wish to be treated ? The same rule would direct me how to treat another.’—Do you expect your neighbour to rejoice in your prosperity, or sympathize with you in your adversity ? Would you have him to be tender of your reputation, and ready to put the best construction upon your words or actions ? Are you unwilling he should spread an evil report of you ? Do you desire him to direct you when mistaken ? Would you desire that another should entertain angry or malicious thoughts concerning you ? Would you like he should envy your prosperity, or rejoice in your afflictions ? Then your expectations from others have the force of a law upon yourselves ; it should sparkle and shine in your breast like the Urim and Thummim on the breast of the high priest.

The observance of this rule is necessary to constitute you a real Christian.—An unfaithful, an unjust, and an uncharitable Christian, is as great a contradiction as a prayerless, a swearing, or a defrauding Christian.—Men cannot look into our hearts, but they have a right to look into and examine our actions ; and it is incredible

dible what injury the Christian Religion has received, from the evil walk and bad tempers of its professors.—These have opened the mouths of Jews, Turks, and Infidels against our religion;—when they see the professors of the Gospel making use of every base method to accomplish their ends,—that they are deceitful, over-reaching, contentious, sordid, covetous, unjust, uncharitable, and can make religion a cloak for slavery, or a stratagem to accomplish a base design; they conclude of course that the religion of Christians is a cheat.—On the other hand, I know of nothing that has a greater tendency to propagate true religion, than that the professors of the gospel, should be governed by the spirit of the gospel.

I might multiply arguments;—but I conclude by adding, that the humanity and gentleness recommended in the text, promotes and carries along with it inward tranquility in our own breast.—This was the spirit which comforted *Jeremiah* amidst the hatred and persecution of the people.—When benignity and goodwill reign in the heart, we are always least in danger of being ruffled without.—The peace of God in the heart fills it with serenity;—it is the sweet sun-shine of the mind;—when this is the prevailing temper, every person, and
 2 every

every occurrence is beheld in the most favourable light. When the clouds of disgust, anger, and ill-will gather in the mind, immediately the scene changes, nature seems transformed, and the appearance of all things blackens:—Violent spirits, like troubled waters, render all images which reflect upon them distorted and broken; but wherever the gospel prevails in the heart, it banishes hatred, bigotry, variance, wrath, envy and strife; for “they that are CHRISTIANS do crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.”—But I hasten,

IIIIdly, To make some Inferences.—

1. Is it true, that the spirit of violence is contrary to the Gospel of CHRIST? then we may learn from whence flows that spirit of oppression and violence which abounds in the world: It comes from *Satan* and the pride of the heart. In the fulness of self-estimation, men forget what they are;—men are rigorous with respect to the offences of others, as if they themselves had never offended;—they are unfeeling to the distresses of others, as if they themselves were incapable of suffering. How shocking is the sight, to see men become enemies to one another—inveterate foes to their own species!

2dly.

2dly. Learn from hence, doing violence to men's persons or property, is directly contrary to the Gospel of peace and the happiness of mankind.—Coercive measures are no arguments to convince the understanding ; therefore all tumults, riots, insurrections, demolishing and burning of houses and places of worship are directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Sorry I am to hear that the metropolis, and some other parts of this kingdom, have been recently disgraced by such outrageous proceedings.—Altho' I heartily detest *Papery*, and cannot but consider it as subversive of the GOSPEL of JESUS and the just rights of mankind,—yet I do not hate the persons of those who profess that religion ; nor would I hurt a hair of their heads on any account, or offer the least injury to their property. *Papists* have slain their thousands, yet that is no reason for *Protestants* to persecute them, or for one Protestant Sect to persecute another.—Whatsoever is right, we know that persecution is wrong :—no method or means can convince the understanding or conciliate the affections, but rational conviction, and scriptural arguments. Truth is too noble a principle to require any other. In matters of religion, all other methods of dealing with opponents should be disdained as absurd, and abhorred as iniquitous.—There was a time when the

Church had reason to complain, in the language of the Psalmist, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, we went through fire and through water."—Cruel *Nimrods* came riding over the heads of the innocent; yet they could sing at last, "Thou broughtest us into a wealthy place."—This was the victory of their patience.

3dly. Are Christians forbidden to offer violence to any man? then let all that profess the gospel cultivate the temper and spirit thereof.—The gospel that turns wolves into lambs, never turns lambs into wolves.—Remember, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God:" For want of considering this, we are apt to fall into violent measures.—The cause of religion requires warmth, but it should be a warmth guided by knowledge. Saul in his fury, might breath out threatenings and slaughter, and—*Papists* may think they are doing God service, when they massacre or consign over to the flames thousands of supposed Heretics; but those that have imbibed the spirit of the gospel, have not so learned Christ. The Ark of God requires no such weapons to defend it.—Though we cannot wish *Papists* *Good Speed*, while they hold such erroneous doctrines, yet no man has a right to smite them
in

in the face, or to offer the least injury to their persons or property.

4thly. This doctrine teaches all Christians to love one another.—You all profess to be baptized into *one* spirit, shew it by your love to one another.—When the embers of contention begin to smoke, strive instantly to put it out. There is nothing that the devil grudges more to Christians than peace and unanimity among themselves. If he cannot rend them from Christ, he will do what he can to make them rend one another, as it were, asunder, by sowing the seed of discord among them; that like a shattered fleet in a storm, they may beat against each other—'till equal, inconceivable injury is sustained, and but too frequently utter destruction.

5thly. Examine yourselves whether you are governed by the temper recommended in the text.—Have you been careful not to offer violence to any man? Have you been careful to injure no good man in his name, reputation and character? Have you ever entertained evil thoughts of any without foundation? Are you acquitted, or self-condemned?—Let us consult our own consciences, this day, and they will tell us.—Let us remember, that a proper spirit and temper in the professors of the gospel,
is

is absolutely necessary to recommend it to others.
 O Let us study an upright, consistent character !
 Let it not be said of any of us, " These people
 ' make a mighty stir about their religion
 ' and their orthodoxy : they make a great noise
 ' about prayer and preaching ; yet they can
 ' slander, they can backbite, can speak evil of
 ' others, they can clandestinely cheat, they
 ' can borrow, without making any conscience
 ' of paying, they can lie, and take a *bribe*, *

as

* *Bribery* is a heinous complicated, epidemical crime, which, like adultery, cannot be committed alone.—And, however it may be made a jest of by multitudes in our depraved age, it is a Sin awfully threatened with vengeance in the book of God. The scripture assures us that " a Bribe blindeth the eyes " and perverts the judgment."—Bribery was the sin of BALAAM, and therefore it is called " the wages of " unrighteousness " by the apostle.—The worst sin that was ever committed under the canopy of heaven, was committed through a *bribe* ; I mean, the *betraying* of CHRIST.—Bribery was the sin of Judas ; whose question was, " *What will you give me, and I will deliver him into your hands ?*"—And it is too much to " be feared, many of our great men, and thousands of corrupt *Free-men* in Boroughs and Corporations, betray their country for Bribes, Places, and Pensions.

‘ as soon as those who make no profession.’
 If this be the case with any who now hear me,
 you may call yourselves what you please, but
 you are very far from being Christians.

I conclude with repeating what I have partly
 mentioned before :—Let your hearts be go-
 verned by the love of God, and the love of all
 the human race, especially those that are of the
 household of faith :—Unite this amiable spirit
 with

Bribery was the sin of *Gebazi*, for which he and his
 posterity were punished with the leprosy. He that
 offers and he that receives a bribe, are both unjust
 and unfaithful to the trust committed to them.—He
 that gives, and he that receives a Bribe, cannot be
 a good man ; for it is absolutely inconsistent with up-
 rightness and integrity. The Prophet *Samuel* ap-
 peals to all *Israel*, saying, “ Of whom have I re-
 ceived a Bribe ? ” and *Isaiah* iii. 15. we read, that
 “ The good man shaketh his hands from holding a
 “ Bribe.”—The prophet’s image is strong and
 beautiful ; “ He shaketh his hands,” just as a person
 would do who has burning coals thrown upon them,
 or a viper fastening to his fingers ; in such a case,
 no one would debate with himself a moment con-
 cerning the expediency of the thing, but in-
 stantly cast away the pernicious monster.—The Al-
 mighty has threatened “ that wrath shall consume
 “ the Tabernacles of bribery,” *Job* xv. 34. They

with a proper zeal, for that all is just and good ;
 Let piety and humanity be combined together.
 —The merciful man will comfort the disconsolate ;—instruct the ignorant,—give counsel to the doubtful ; and salutary reproofs where necessity

may stand for a while, but in time the indignation will kindle, and all the rivers in the South cannot quench it : Hence some who have been observant of the ways of Providence have asserted, that those families who have enriched themselves by bribery, built them fine houses, &c. have not only lost their credit before men, but that few or none of their race continue in any degree of prosperity to the third or fourth generation ; they have their names blotted out from under heaven ; their posterity become beggars, or, one way or another miserable in this life.

This was one of the crying sins against which *Amos* was sent to preach, and which at length carried Israel captive :—It was the overthrow of the *Roman* empire ; and, if public virtue does not take place, will be the final overthrow of the *British* also ; for it has already dismembered it, and thrown the whole into confusion.

I hope some able pen will take up this subject and expose this predominant, daring sin of Bribery ; which, to use the words of a noble peer, has made our corporations the sinks of corruption,—and from the *Guilt of which, may the Lord deliver this Nation.*

necessity requires them ;—he will vindicate those that are unjustly aspersed, espouse the cause of the distressed and injured, bear with the infirmities of the weak,—nor will he think it sufficient to send away the indigent with *Good Words* only.

If you wish to be the followers of JESUS indeed, if you wish to pass through life, and to meet death in whatever form it may approach you, with calmness and serenity—If you desire to partake of the glories of the resurrection in the last day, and enjoy the happiness of heaven forever,—O then imbibe the spirit of the Gospel!—Depend upon the SAVIOUR's atonement, and follow HIS example, who “ when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not.” In life and in death study to be faithful to him, true to your consciences and just to all mankind ; you will then find that the religion of JESUS will sustain you when every other source of consolation fail, and you will be enabled to resign your departing spirits into the hands of that JESUS who hath promised, “ that where he is, there shall his servants be,”——Which may God of his infinite mercy grant to all that hear me this day, for his Name's sake. Amen.

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